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AUTHOR Turner, Tyra N.; Porter, Dion F.; Edwards, Dothel W.; Moore, Corey L.

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring novice students and faculty members by experienced members has become a vital component in rehabilitation counseling education. In this paper the mentoring process from a faculty-student and an existing faculty-new faculty viewpoint is considered. First, there is an overview of how mentoring both globally and specifically relates to rehabilitation counseling is provided. Mentoring helps students get off to a good start and is a source of valuable information about the degree process. It helps them keep on track towards graduation and assists them in transitioning to the work world. In the field of rehabilitation counseling, mentoring helps students enhance their writing; researching; and analytic skills, main areas of concern. A formal mentor should also be provided to assist novice faculty entering academic. By providing new faculty with knowledge and support, mentors can help them progress toward tenure. Constructive feedback can give them the information they need to go forward with promotions. Both formal and informal mentoring relationships have distinct purposes and are vital to the facilitation, education, training, and overall growth of new students and faculty entering academia. (JDM)

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Passing the Baton: Taking Strides in the Mentoring Process

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Tyra N. Turner
Dion F. Porter
Dothel W. Edwards
Corey L. Moore

Abstract. *This article describes the mentoring process and its importance related to rehabilitation counseling education. Specifically, it will address the mentoring process from a faculty-student, existing faculty-new faculty/mentor-protégé standpoint. This article will first define mentoring both globally as well as how it relates to rehabilitation counseling; it will then focus on the purpose of mentoring related to rehabilitation counseling education; different mentoring styles will be analyzed; and finally, specific issues related to mentoring will be explored from a rehabilitation counseling education perspective.*

An Overview of Mentoring

According to a 1978 Harvard Review article, "everyone who makes it has a mentor." This is to say that most professionals in any field who have experienced success within their respective careers have had some type of formal or informal mentoring. Hilgert and Leonard (1998) define mentoring as the guiding of a new employee by a more experienced employee. This article though, will focus specifically on the mentoring process and interaction that takes place between a professor of rehabilitation counseling and a student studying in a rehabilitation counseling program. A rehabilitation program could include students studying at the Masters or Doctoral level. The mentoring process could also take place at any point throughout the tenure of a Masters or Doctoral students' degree program. Mentoring from the standpoint of a professor/student relationship can be very important in the shaping, guiding and directing of new students into the field of rehabilitation counseling. The following section will focus on some of the important aspects of the professor-student/mentor-protégé mentoring process.

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Important Aspects of Mentoring

The mentoring process has many advantages for the student being mentored or protégé, as well as for the professor, or mentor. For entering students, the transition between one degree sequence to the next can be a challenging experience. A mentor provided to an entering student at the onset of their degree program can assist in making the transition from one mode of study to the next, an easier one. Many students due to a rough transition, get off to a bad start within their degree programs which could prove disastrous for them in the end. One important aspect of starting any degree program is indeed getting off to a good start, and an effective mentor can better insure that this takes place.

Incoming students have a lot to learn about many important aspects of their new program. A mentor can facilitate the dissemination of important information to a protégé upon him or her entering a program. Information such as campus culture, course scheduling, specific program focus and basic program survival tips is paramount. This important information can help guide and direct a student throughout their degree process and keep them on track toward a timely graduation and transition into the world of work. Many of these mentor/protégé relationships end in lifelong friendships and collaborations, but this type of outcome is not mandatory for mentoring to be effective. Each individual mentoring relationship is different than the next mentoring relationship mainly due to the unique differences between the mentors involved. The mentoring styles between each mentor will more than likely be different, while at the same time having some similarities. Regardless, any type of formal or informal mentoring relationship can prove to be of great value to a new student or beginning faculty member.

Mentoring Related to Rehabilitation Counseling

Mentoring within the field of rehabilitation can be a very important process for a student or protégé to experience. An incoming student entering the field of rehabilitation has a lot to learn concerning the three areas of teaching, research and service (Matkin & Riggar, 1991). According to Matkin and Riggar (1991) these are the three important components and major focus areas of any rehabilitation counseling program.

Assisting new students with the development of their own teaching style is very important during a mentor/protégé relationship. Each student will have a very unique stance on how they would like to teach and what teaching modalities are best and more effective for them. Many students' individual teaching style will differ depending on their academic background or even their previous work experience.

Community service is also an important aspect of the rehabilitation field. A good mentor should provide ample information concerning community resources, and creative ways in which protégés can provide productive services to their community. Simply a listing of community resources and services needed, can be an asset to a protégé desiring to deliver services within their surrounding community.

Finally, mentoring students to conduct rehabilitation research is paramount since research is the bases of many rehabilitation counseling programs (Matkin & Riggar, 1991). Assistance on which type of statistical classes are needed and should be taken can provide a protégé with a good start. Other important components such as conducting research studies, analyzing data and publishing scholarly articles can also be addressed during the mentoring process.

Areas in Which Mentoring is Paramount

There are specific areas in which a solid mentoring process is paramount. These are the areas that a graduating student needs to be strong in order to survive not only in the academic world, but also in both the Public and Private Sector of rehabilitation counseling. These areas include but are not limited to; writing styles and writing improvement of new students/protégés, deciding on an area of concentration, developing research interests either for a dissertation or a thesis, conducting rehabilitation research through empirical studies, publishing, grant writing and, assistance in making important career decisions and weighing options after graduation. If all or most of the above areas are focused on during the mentoring process, a protégé should leave his/her respective rehabilitation counseling program with ample guidance and direction in order to be successful in the rehabilitation counseling field.

The Purpose of Mentoring

Many people may ask the question, "why is it that we need planned mentoring programs?" Overall, mentoring enhances the protégé's sense of completeness, identity and work role effectiveness (Feist-Price, 2001). As such, mentoring has become such an effective management training and career development tool that organizations are implementing formal mentoring plans designed to foster such relationships among their employees (McKeen & Burke, 1989). For the protégé, the outcome desired is that his/her skills are adequate to perform all functions of a particular position (e.g., rehabilitation practitioner, rehabilitation educator, rehabilitation researcher). For example, if the protégé is a junior researcher and the mentor is a senior researcher, the outcome desired is that the protégé self-actualizes as a competent researcher. The protégé should believe that

attitudes, values, and behaviors (Kram, 1985). In short, the mentor embraces opportunities in which he/she can model appropriate attitudes, values and behaviors for the protégé. Second, the mentor provides a forum in which the protégé is encouraged to talk openly about both experiences and fears (Kram, 1985). For this to be accomplished, the relationship must be based on trust and mutual respect. Finally, the mentor interacts informally with the protégé at work (Kram, 1985). That is, the protégé and mentor might interact socially in the work place as well as outside the work place. The protégé should be aware of those dynamics that occur outside the workplace (e.g., talking business on the golf course, or at a luncheon) that could likewise enhance his/her probability for success.

Different Styles of Mentoring

Definitions of Formal and Informal Mentoring

Research in the area of mentoring has identified two styles or types of mentoring, which are formal and informal mentoring relationships. According to Ragins (1989) formal mentoring are relationships that are developed through the initiative of an organization. For example, an organization such as a rehabilitation education program could establish an informal mentoring program to orientate new students or new/junior faculty members into the program (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller 2000). Informal mentoring are relationships that usually are developed spontaneously, without organizational assistance (Ragins, 1989). In addition, persons that are involved in an informal mentoring relationship are motivated through mutual identification and developmental needs between the mentor and the protégé. Organizations' use of either of the two styles of

his/her ability to develop strong research designs, conduct statistical analysis, report findings clearly and concisely, write grants, etc. is sufficient to perform all functions of the research position.

Mentoring also provides the protégé with wisdom, knowledge, and support in a manner in which the protégé can benefit. In other words, constructive feedback from the mentor to the protégé's regarding performance is essential for a successful mentoring relationship. For example, if the mentor is a senior level rehabilitation educator (i.e., professor) and the protégé is a junior level educator (i.e., assistant professor) concerned about obtaining promotion and tenure, the mentor would provide insight into the do's and don'ts for achieving promotion and tenure. Specifically, the mentor might advise his protégé of the importance of accumulating a certain number of empirically based publications so that the protégé might increase his/her chances for achieving promotion and tenure.

Mentoring also assists the protégé in dealing with obstacles and problems that may occur as well as sets high expectations of performance. The protégé might be unaware of ways to resolve specific problems. Therefore, the mentor might provide the protégé with useful information for navigating around and over such problems. Finally, mentoring seeks to foster the professional development of the protégé. If the desired goal is produce a competent practitioner, educator or researcher, then trust and mutual respect should form the bases for such a successful relationship.

In successful mentoring relationships, the benefits garnered by the protégé are plentiful. However, those benefits can only be achieved if the mentor takes on an active role in the relationship. First, the mentor serves as a role model relative to appropriate

mentoring is driven by the purpose in which the organization wants to establish a mentoring relationship.

Purpose of Formal and Informal Mentoring

Both formal and informal mentoring relationships have distinct purposes. For example, formal mentoring relationships provide an organization with the ability to place emphasis on short-term goals that are specific to the protégé's current job or academic program responsibilities (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Likewise, informal mentoring relationships usually offer an organization such as a rehabilitation education program the opportunity to assist the protégé in achieving long-term goals (Kram, 1985). For example, a new/junior faculty member could have a long term-goal of achieving tenure status. In the case of a new student in a rehabilitation education program, the student might have the desire to develop the skills and qualities needed to successfully negotiate the academic rigors of his/her program curriculum.

Formal and informal mentoring relationships pose characteristics which are unique to one another. In order for an organization to effectively determine which style of mentoring would be the most efficient and effective, it is crucial to understand the inherent differences among the two mentoring relationships. For example, a formal mentoring relationship is usually established through a third party such as a department chair of a rehabilitation education program that selects a faculty person to mentor a new/junior faculty or a student or group of students. Whereas, informal mentoring relationships are usually established without the assistance of a third party such as a senior faculty person that self-initiates a mentoring relationship with a new or junior

faculty person. Again, the self-initiation of the faculty/mentor could be prompted by the mutual identification and the developmental needs of the prospective protégé.

Length of Time

Because differences exist in the purpose of formal and informal mentoring relationships, the literature also suggests that the length of time that formal and informal mentoring relationships occur will also vary. For instance, Ragin, Cotton, and Miller (2000) mentioned that formal mentoring relationships usually last between six months to a year. However, informal mentoring relationships have been found to last as long as three to six years (Ragin, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

Important Issues in Mentoring

There are several relevant issues facing both academicians and students as it relates to the mentoring process. The issues encountered include (a) defining who is responsible for initiating the mentoring process, (b) preventing the similar-to-me syndrome, (c) having the desire and time to mentor, and (d) addressing gender and culture issues that may come into play during the mentoring process.

Who Is Responsible For Initiating the Mentoring Process?

One frequently asked question is "Who initiates the mentoring process?" Many researchers suggest that the faculty member should solely be responsible for initiating the mentoring relationship. However, others believe that the student should initiate the mentoring relationship with the faculty member of his/her choosing. Many departments within institutions of higher learning have instituted formal mentoring programs in which each student is assigned a mentor. The mentor serves as a "navigator" assisting the student to make judicious career choices.

"Similar-to-me" Syndrome

Another issue encountered in the mentoring process is what the authors term as the "similar-to-me" syndrome. The "similar-to-me" syndrome is more prevalent among academicians than students. This syndrome occurs when the faculty member desires to mentor only those students that share common theoretical orientations, hobbies, career paths, and other traits that are similar. The problem occurs when no students exist that fit the desired mold. Students not fitting the mold of any faculty member are usually left without mentors. The student then can make uninformed academic and non-academic decisions. Part of the philosophical underpinnings of the rehabilitation counseling process includes the importance of informed choice. Informed choice should not only be conveyed to customers within the rehabilitation process, but also to customers in academia, which are the students themselves.

Desire and Time to Mentor

Although many individuals regard mentoring as part of the academicians' role and function, others view it as a privilege if the desire and time is there to do so. It is evident that the mentoring process can be time consuming. Mentoring usually requires weekly or bi-weekly meetings with the protégé to address any questions or concerns expressed. Mentoring may also involve professional development activities that include, but are not limited to (a) attending conferences, (b) assisting in writing publications, and (c) presenting at professional forums. It is not uncommon to find a faculty member mentoring more than eight students within one semester. The problem occurs when faculty are expected to mentor an extremely large group of individuals, along with their other academic functions without any incentive. This incongruence creates a sense of

apathy expressed by the faculty member toward the mentoring process. Many faculty have the desire to mentor, but feel that the academy does not reward their mentoring efforts. Feeling unvalued affects the faculty member's desire to continue to be a part of the mentoring process.

Gender and Cultural Issues

Research continually addresses both gender and cultural issues in mentoring (Feist-Price, 2001). It is important for faculty and students to become aware of the gender and cultural factors that influence the mentoring relationship. Especially in cross-gender relationships, both the faculty member may be viewed as an "Item" by others and subsequently be subject to public scrutiny (Feist-Price, 2001). The mentor must also be aware of the tendency for transference and counter transference to occur in the relationship. The female protégé may have the tendency to view the male mentor as her father or significant other (Feist-Price, 2001). The male protégé may also have the tendency to view the female mentor as a mother or significant other. The issue of power is worthy of being noted. Many protégés understandably view their mentor as being in a position of power-especially female protégés'. As a result, the female protégé becomes very hesitant in initiating the mentoring relationship. A female protégé concerned with the issue of power may be viewed as lacking leadership ability or unmotivated. Addressing such issues as they occur is of the utmost importance during the mentoring process.

Mentoring should also be provided within a cultural context. Extensive research has been conducted on the effects of culture on the mentoring and/or supervision process (Hilgert & Leonard, 1998). The culture of the mentor may dictate who initiates the

mentoring relationship. Similar to the female protégé, the person from a minority culture may be hesitant to initiate the mentoring relationship. Depending upon the protégés' culture, the protégé may not be as assertive as his/her other counterparts. The mentor may have to approach the protégé from a different culture to initiate the mentoring relationship.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Faculty Members Involved In the Mentoring Process

Mentoring novice students and faculty members (proteges) by experienced faculty members (mentor) has become a vital component in rehabilitation counseling education. Those proteges receiving either formal or informal mentoring can gain valuable knowledge, education, expertise, research and teaching experience. This article discussed the main components of mentoring, how mentoring relates to rehabilitation counseling, the different types of mentoring and other issues involved in the mentoring relationship and process as a whole.

Faculty members at institutions not employing the use of any type of mentoring should research the many benefits that this process can bring. Students who receive either formal or informal mentoring will more than likely become a stronger student, researcher, teacher and rehabilitation professional. Mentoring can really add to the overall substance and content of a rehabilitation education program. This type of relationship can be healthy for both the mentor as well as the protégé. Faculty members seeking to employ the use of a formal mentoring program should look into other mentoring models presently in place at other institutions. Each incoming student or protégé, should be matched with a faculty member, or mentor as soon as possible after starting their respective programs. By the same token, novice faculty members entering the academic arena should also be

provided with a formal mentor in order to get their careers off to a good start. Finally, in the event that time is not available for a formal mentoring process, then an informal relationship may also be of valuable assistance. But, in the case of an informal mentoring relationship, it will be strictly up to the prospective mentor or protégé to step forward and begin the process. Many formal mentoring relationships have started as a result of an informal mentoring relationship which is simply a growth and building process. But in any case, it is important to have some type of mentoring in place for entering students as well as beginning faculty members. This is vital in order to assist in the facilitation, education, training and overall growth of new students, rehabilitation professionals and novice academicians entering the academic arena.

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